



NEURO-PSYCHIATRIC INSTITUTE
THE CENTER FOR THE HEALTH SCIENCES
760 WESTWOOD PLAZA
LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA 90024

March 23, 1978

Joshua Lederberg
Rockefeller University
New York, N.Y. 10021

Dear Dr. Lederberg:

I am delighted to learn that you have become a colleague in the pursuit of the whys and wherefore's in scientific socialization processes.

I have no references to suggest on career failures in science. It is an inadequately developed area for a number of reasons: (1) defining failure is fraught with problems, e.g., many career changes are made probably to ward off/avoid/deny failures, but since career changes have some adaptive functions usually, they are often never recognized as failures. Also, numbers of scientists keep many research areas or problems going, so if one doesn't work out, another is available. Merely their ability to continue in one area can serve to mask problems, even if reality factors, as loss of funding that you suggest, can play a role in changing functions of a scientist, e.g. frequently turning toward teaching and textbook writing, I think in today's academic world, one would be hard put to define such worthy endeavors as less socially valuable, goal-directed, or personally gratifying, as research.

The world "career failures" seems to be on the way to becoming obsolete. The premium placed on successive careers in a person's life (aren't you an example?) makes it probable that some scientists will never view getting the Nobel Prize their ~~sole~~ goal; rather they might say, "If I get the Nobel Prize during the years I'm willing to devote to science " ... I am increasingly coming across in the journalistic literature anecdotes about scientists who voluntarily abandon scientific careers early and there may be more since so often scientists (even young ones) mention that the "fun" has gone out of science.

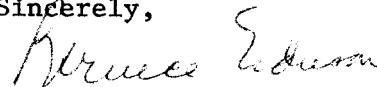
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Would you consider as a career failure the established person who becomes outdated, yet continues to do more or less routine work in his area? As I am now embarking on a 20-year followup on my original group of scientists, I am learning about the personal anguish of men who wish they could retire early because they want out of the daily confrontation with work that has little excitement, and in which they take little pride. They know their universities would like to get rid of them and their obsolescent expensive equipment, but no mechanism exists. Is this career failure, or at what point does one take stock?

The failure to achieve tenure at UC has forced us to look at the reasons for not being promoted at the appropriate times. The most hotly debated issues are leave periods during which academic work is not done. (See the attached).

May I call you on one of my New York City trips? I would welcome the opportunity to talk at more length.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Bernice Eiduson".

Bernice T. Eiduson, Ph.D.
Professor and Principal
Project Investigator